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Pop go the weasels

With the boss out of town, what better time to knock off an old enemy? And so the execution of Constantine Menges has reportedly been rescheduled for this morning. If the guillotine drops, it will be a great loss for conservatives and a victory for the foxes left in charge of the henhouse.

Mr. Menges is a dynamic purveyor of what used to be known as Reaganism, especially in Latin American affairs. The president himself has publicly praised Mr. Menges. And well he should. The two have a lot in common.

If you wanted to see what Mr. Reagan was going to do before he did it, you could read Mr. Menges. It was long before Mr. Reagan made his famous "Star Wars" speech that Mr. Menges wrote, in October 1978, of the need for a strategic defense. Mr. Menges also gave plenty of warning about the true nature of the Sandinistas, spelling it all out before the Sandinistas even took charge.

And so it would seem that Mr. Menges would be welcome at the White House. His contribution to the Central America debate has been especially valuable, as certified by Jeane Kirkpatrick. With the vote on aid to the

resistance still in doubt, his presence is vital.

But Mr. Menges is not the kind of guy the foreign policy establishment cares for. His policy input has been constantly challenged; he has already been removed from his former job as the highest-ranking Latin affairs specialist on the National Security Council staff. With the presidential A team off in the Orient, Mr. Menges's enemies want to move in for the kill.

Now, it's an interesting thing about this administration that the people who seem the most out of whack with the president come off the best. Messrs. Baker and Deaver, for instance, were never forced out of their jobs, even though they were not the ideological soul mates to the president that Mr. Menges has been. Mr. Menges is also one of the rare administration figures who does not snipe at his "colleagues" in the press. Unfortunately, his loyalty doesn't seem to make much difference.

Congressional Republicans want Mr. Menges to stay, and word is that their discontent will be made known to the president. Mr. Menges may not feel it is proper to raise a public cry, but his friends should, every one of them.